

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2009 No Child Left Behind - Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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Type of School: (Check all that apply) ☐ Elementary ☒ Middle ☐ High ☐ K-12 ☐ Other  
☐ Charter ☐ Title I ☐ Magnet ☐ Choice

Name of Principal: Dr. Mel Ross

Official School Name: Stephen Decatur Middle School

School Mailing Address:  
9815 Seahawk Road  
Berlin, MD 21811-2956

County: Worcester County State School Code Number\*: 0308

Telephone: (410) 641-2846 Fax: (410) 641-3274

Web site/URL: http://continue.to/sdms E-mail: mvross@mail.worcester.k12.md.us

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge all information is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Superintendent\*: Dr. Jon Andes

District Name: Worcester County Tel: (410) 632-5000

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of School Board President/Chairperson: Mr. Robert Hulbard

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I - Eligibility Certification), and certify that to the best of my knowledge it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature) Date \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Private Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

Original signed cover sheet only should be mailed by expedited mail or a courier mail service (such as USPS Express Mail, FedEx or UPS) to Aba Kumi, Director, NCLB-Blue Ribbon Schools Program, Office of Communications and Outreach, US Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave., SW, Room 5E103, Washington, DC 20202-8173.

## PART I - ELIGIBILITY CERTIFICATION

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The signatures on the first page of this application certify that each of the statements below concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) requirements is true and correct.

1. The school has some configuration that includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even K-12 schools, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The school has made adequate yearly progress each year for the past two years and has not been identified by the state as "persistently dangerous" within the last two years.
3. To meet final eligibility, the school must meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirement in the 2008-2009 school year. AYP must be certified by the state and all appeals resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum and a significant number of students in grades 7 and higher must take the course.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2003.
6. The nominated school has not received the No Child Left Behind – Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, or 2008.
7. The nominated school or district is not refusing OCR access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
8. OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
9. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
10. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

**All data are the most recent year available.**

**DISTRICT** (Questions 1-2 not applicable to private schools)

1. Number of schools in the district:
- |           |                     |
|-----------|---------------------|
| 5         | Elementary schools  |
| 3         | Middle schools      |
|           | Junior high schools |
| 3         | High schools        |
| 3         | Other               |
| <b>14</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>        |

2. District Per Pupil Expenditure: 13940

Average State Per Pupil Expenditure: 11907

**SCHOOL** (To be completed by all schools)

3. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:

- ☐ Urban or large central city  
☐ Suburban school with characteristics typical of an urban area  
☐ Suburban  
☒ Small city or town in a rural area  
☐ Rural

4. 18 Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school.

     If fewer than three years, how long was the previous principal at this school?

5. Number of students as of October 1 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school only:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total	Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK			0	7	156	155	311
K			0	8	182	157	339
1			0	9			0
2			0	10			0
3			0	11			0
4			0	12			0
5			0	Other			0
6			0				
TOTAL STUDENTS IN THE APPLYING SCHOOL							650

6. Racial/ethnic composition of the school: 1 % American Indian or Alaska Native  
2 % Asian  
13 % Black or African American  
4 % Hispanic or Latino  
0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander  
80 % White  
       % Two or more races  
100 % Total

Only the seven standard categories should be used in reporting the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.

7. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the past year: 8 %

This rate is calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

(1)	Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	36
(2)	Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1 until the end of the year.	19
(3)	Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)].	55
(4)	Total number of students in the school as of October 1.	677
(5)	Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4).	0.081
(6)	Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100.	8.124

8. Limited English proficient students in the school: 2 %

Total number limited English proficient 13

Number of languages represented: 3

Specify languages:

Spanish, Korean, Chinese

9. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 29 %

Total number students who qualify: 187

If this method does not produce an accurate estimate of the percentage of students from low-income families, or the school does not participate in the free and reduced-price school meals program, specify a more accurate estimate, tell why the school chose it, and explain how it arrived at this estimate.

10. Students receiving special education services: 10 %

Total Number of Students Served: 66

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional categories.

<u>7</u> Autism	<u>0</u> Orthopedic Impairment
<u>      </u> Deafness	<u>27</u> Other Health Impaired
<u>0</u> Deaf-Blindness	<u>26</u> Specific Learning Disability
<u>0</u> Emotional Disturbance	<u>4</u> Speech or Language Impairment
<u>1</u> Hearing Impairment	<u>1</u> Traumatic Brain Injury
<u>0</u> Mental Retardation	<u>0</u> Visual Impairment Including Blindness
<u>0</u> Multiple Disabilities	<u>0</u> Developmentally Delayed

11. Indicate number of full-time and part-time staff members in each of the categories below:

	Number of Staff	
	<u>Full-Time</u>	<u>Part-Time</u>
Administrator(s)	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>
Classroom teachers	<u>32</u>	<u>0</u>
Special resource teachers/specialists	<u>10</u>	<u>2</u>
Paraprofessionals	<u>14</u>	<u>0</u>
Support staff	<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>
Total number	<u>65</u>	<u>2</u>

12. Average school student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the Full Time Equivalent of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 20 :1

13. Show the attendance patterns of teachers and students as a percentage. Only middle and high schools need to supply dropout rates. Briefly explain in the Notes section any attendance rates under 95%, teacher turnover rates over 12%, or student dropout rates over 5%.

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Daily student attendance	95%	95%	95%	94%	93%
Daily teacher attendance	98%	98%	98%	98%	98%
Teacher turnover rate	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Student dropout rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Please provide all explanations below.

SDMS is located just outside of Ocean City, Maryland. Ocean City is a resort town and many of our parents are local business owners. As a result many families plan vacations in the fall and winter when the tourist traffic slows down here. This causes our daily attendance rate to fall, on average, at 94%. It is a challenge we face but we are working towards better communication with parents and encouraging them to vacation around school closings.

14. For schools ending in grade 12 (high schools).

Show what the students who graduated in Spring 2008 are doing as of the Fall 2008.

Graduating class size	0	
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0	%
Enrolled in a community college	0	%
Enrolled in vocational training	0	%
Found employment	0	%
Military service	0	%
Other (travel, staying home, etc.)	0	%
Unknown	0	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>%</b>

## PART III - SUMMARY

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Our mission at Stephen Decatur Middle School, an increasingly diverse community, is to promote lifelong learning and fully develop the individual potential of all students. Recognizing the unique needs of adolescent learners, we strive to prepare our students to become productive and responsible citizens in an ever-changing world.

Stephen Decatur Middle School is located in Berlin, Maryland, seven miles from a major summer resort, Ocean City. In the summer, the area is teeming with tourists. In the winter, it returns to a rural atmosphere, with the departure of seasonal workers and visitors alike. Many families relocate to this area because of the beach. However, a recent conversation with a parent who had moved his three children to Berlin from a metropolitan area revealed this reason -- "It's for the great schools here. My kids were floundering in a large, impersonal school. They're bright girls, but they were not being challenged. They felt as though their teachers didn't know them, and they had lost enthusiasm for learning. I can't tell you what a difference coming to this school has made for them." It's testimony like this, which we hear regularly, that affirms we are on track with our mission – to promote lifelong learning and fully develop the individual potential of all students.

One of the cornerstones of our school's success, in developing the potential of all our students, is our dedication to the operational structure of teaming. Each grade is divided into four teams of approximately 80 students each, served by a math, a science, a social studies, and a language arts teacher. One special education teacher and two assistants are assigned to cover two of the teams in a grade, providing additional support. Students are heterogeneously grouped, with all special needs students fully included. Teachers are responsible for all the decisions regarding how their students will meet with success. The team is free to structure the classes the way they feel it is best to meet the needs of their students – flexible grouping? Team teaching? Pull-out groups for remediation? Enrichment periods? Integrating technology? Teaming allows teachers to meet another key element of our mission statement, recognizing the unique needs of adolescent learners.

However, academics are not the only way student needs are met. Our school promotes lifelong learning and develops student potential through participation in music, art, technology, foreign language, and wellness. Students can develop leadership skills through participation in clubs, student government, and service learning. A thriving after school program allows opportunity for enrichment, remediation, problem-solving, and creativity.

Even before the mandated NCLB testing, Stephen Decatur Middle was recognized numerous times for our students' success on state testing, resulting in SDMS being named one of the top 15 high performing middle schools in the state, as early as 1997. SDMS is also fully accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

Because of our emphasis on promoting the growth of all students, SDMS has been successful in closing the achievement gap between its white and minority students. Since 2004, our baseline year for mandated testing, the difference between the performance of white students vs. African American students has narrowed from 41.1% to 21.1% on Math 8; and from 30.0% to 22.4% on Reading 8.

It is our teachers who make the difference to each of our students and Stephen Decatur Middle is proud to have had three teachers named the Worcester County Teacher of the Year since 2000. Two were named state finalists, and one, Michelle Hammond, was named Maryland Teacher of the Year in 2007. Our exemplary staff, nine of whom are National Board Certified, shares its wealth of experience, knowledge, and best practices so that we as a school community may continue to grow and improve.

## PART IV - INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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### 1. Assessment Results:

Stephen Decatur Middle School has been recognized for sustained growth and outstanding achievement on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA). The MSA was first administered in March 2003 in response to the federal No Child Left Behind Act. This test assesses student mastery of reading and mathematics objectives as outlined in the Maryland Content Standards and the Voluntary State Curriculum. This criterion-referenced assessment is administered annually to Maryland students in Grades 3- 8. MSA scores indicate student, school, district, and state achievement measured on three proficiency levels: advanced, proficient, and basic. The state of Maryland establishes standards to measure Adequate Yearly Progress of the total student population as well as subgroups within that population and ensure continuous progress toward the goal of 100% proficiency in 2014. These standards are called the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMO). The AMO in 2008 was 56.4% in mathematics and 70.2% in reading. In 2008 Stephen Decatur Middle had an overall achievement rate of 94.0% in mathematics and 93.3% in reading.

Stephen Decatur Middle, by a wide margin, has surpassed the AMO of proficiency in both reading and mathematics for the past several years. In fact, for the past two years, Stephen Decatur has been recognized by the state of Maryland as one of the top performing middle schools in the area of mathematics and reading in grade 8. In reviewing the data for Stephen Decatur Middle School it should be noted that not only have we been able to raise the bar of excellence for all students, we have also been able to do so within our subgroups. It is important to note that this does not occur at the expense of the majority, but rather along with the majority. In 2008, 84.4% of our African American students in grade 8 achieved proficient or advanced on MSA in mathematics. In 2004, only 28.0% reached that goal. The 56.4 percentage point increase in this subgroup is a testament to the dedication of our teachers and administrators to ensuring the success of all students. It is also a testament to our students' desire and willingness to "step-up" to new challenges to meet success. Similar results can be found in reading. The data reveals an upward trend in all subgroups. In grade 8 reading alone we have been able to move from a 28% advanced pass rate to a 60% advanced pass rate. In five years, we have been able to double the number of students achieving at the highest rate established by the state.

In addition to MSA, all eighth graders are enrolled in Algebra I and subsequently all take the High School Assessment in Algebra and Data Analysis (HSA). This assessment is the first of four tests high school students must take and pass as part of the Maryland High School Diploma Program. Last year, in 2008, 88.0% of our 8th grade students passed the Algebra HSA and received their first credit toward earning a high school diploma. In 2007, 81.1% passed. And even more impressive than those statistics, in 2008, 48.2% of our eighth graders passed this High School Assessment at the advanced level.

From 2004 – 2008 Stephen Decatur students have not only demonstrated high levels of performance, but have also sustained growth toward the 2014 goal. The teachers and administrators at Stephen Decatur Middle School are committed to continuous growth and achievement of all our students. We are confident that the challenging curriculum and the differentiated instruction that is provided on a daily basis will encourage and inspire our students to reach their full potential. Additional information on the Maryland State Department of Education Assessment Program can be located at [www.mdk12.org](http://www.mdk12.org) and [www.mdreportcard.org](http://www.mdreportcard.org).



## **2. Using Assessment Results:**

A central strength of this school is individualized data driven instruction made possible by easy access to an assessment data management program used by all teachers to create and score major tests and quizzes and to retrieve individual achievement results on those assessments by curricula objectives over time. As a result, teachers can closely monitor specific student achievement and teaching teams can make decisions about each student's required treatment on a weekly basis.

During the summer, the school improvement team reviews the state assessment scores and other prior assessment data of individual students and makes recommendations for fall scheduling. Students with areas of weakness are scheduled in one of two reading intervention classes and/or the math lab, in addition to their four academic classes.

Throughout the school year, teaching teams review individual assessment data and create formal plans for each student scoring basic or near basic in math and/or reading. Students in this category may attend after school tutoring sessions, experience brief and temporary pull-out sessions with one-on-one attention, be assigned to the math lab for remediation in a particular objective, be assigned to a reading remediation class, or receive special attention in small groups from an educational assistant or student intern.

Because teaching teams have the flexibility to create their own schedules, students may be temporarily regrouped for specific instruction, depending on assessment data. This flexibility also permits teams to temporarily vary class size, affording a more favorable teacher to student ratio. As an example, a team recently decided to create an additional teaching block in their day. During this additional block students were regrouped based on the results of a recent Integrated Language Arts (ILA) assessment. This allowed the ILA teacher to work with a small group of students struggling with a particular skill while the other teachers provided enrichment activities for the remaining students.

## **3. Communicating Assessment Results:**

Stephen Decatur Middle School realizes the importance of communicating assessment results to students, parents and the community at large in an effort to maximize and maintain working relationships and networks with important stakeholders. This communication occurs through written, verbal and electronic means.

Every week, students are given a grade slip in all four academic classes. A grade slip provides information about student progress on class work, homework, projects, and summative assessments. The purpose of the slip is to inform students and parents about their progress and areas in need of attention. Grade slips are taken home, signed by a parent, and returned to school. This school also distributes traditional report cards at the end of each nine week quarter, assigning students a letter and number grade in each subject. Additionally, students receive a mid-quarterly report, apprising them of satisfactory or unsatisfactory progress per subject with an "S" or a "U." Both must be signed by a parent and returned to school.

Parents with internet access can obtain a password which lets them view electronic teacher grade books. Such access provides the most current data on their child including class work, project, homework, and assessment grades. All teachers give parents their school district email addresses, permitting teachers and parents to communicate freely. When necessary, teachers telephone parents without internet access and submit a telephone log to the principal each month. And, four times a year an afternoon and evening are devoted to individual conferences between parents and teachers to discuss student performance.

To provide students with specific information on assessments after they are graded, assessments are returned to them with a label affixed which indicates specific areas of strength and weakness by objective indicator. These are shared with parents, signed, and returned.

Student performance is shared with the community through monthly newsletters, local newspapers, the district website, and on Back-to-School Night. State assessment results are reviewed by our School Improvement Committee, a committee of parents that meets bi-monthly, for the purpose of making recommendations for improvement.

#### **4. Sharing Success:**

Stephen Decatur Middle School is committed to the development of teacher excellence and outstanding student achievement. Our school has been recognized in both of these areas. Currently, we have nine National Board Certified Teachers, the 2007 Maryland Teacher of the Year, and the 2008 Worcester County Teacher of the Year on staff. Additionally we have been recognized by the Maryland State Department of Education as a top performing middle school for the past two years.

With these types of accomplishments, we believe it is our responsibility to share our practices, strategies, and success stories with our system-wide colleagues. Additionally, SDMS has been called on by other systems looking for similar results. We have always opened our doors and welcomed these visitors.

Our faculty frequently leads county-wide curriculum development and assessment writing. During these sessions, our teachers are able to share their success stories with other teachers in the county. All eighth grade math teachers and our math resource teacher participate in monthly Algebra Summit Meetings. These meetings are county-wide and include all Algebra I teachers. At these meetings our teachers are, routinely, presenters sharing best practices of instruction as well as activities and lesson plans. Integrated Language Arts (ILA) teachers participate and often present at articulation meetings with ILA teachers across the county.

Recently, SDMS was called on to present to the local board of education our Autistic Development Program. This program has been recognized by the Autistic Children Support Group of Worcester County, Inc. as an outstanding program. This presentation provided our county instructional leaders, board members, and community leaders a snapshot of the success our autistic students are experiencing as participants in this program.

Should Stephen Decatur be named a National Blue Ribbon School we will continue to share with system-wide colleagues and welcome neighboring districts into our building. It is by sharing that we are able to refine our own best practices.

## PART V - CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Curriculum:

The Worcester County Middle School Art Curriculum is based on the Maryland Essential Learner Outcomes for the Visual Arts. The curriculum includes the content and methods of inquiry derived from the four interrelated visual arts disciplines. They are: Aesthetic Education; Historical, Cultural, and Social Contexts; Creative Expression and Production; and Aesthetic Criticism. Students become involved with each of these components at their own level of development, as each offers a different dimension for experiencing art. The program at each grade level is sequential, balanced, and comprehensive in the kinds of experiences and opportunities offered to students.

The primary function of the music curriculum is to establish a foundation for a lifelong relationship with music for all students. At both grade levels the music curriculum provides opportunities for all students to develop 1) the skills necessary to perceive, perform, and respond to music; 2) an understanding of music as an essential aspect of history; 3) the ability to creatively organize musical ideas and sounds; and 4) the ability to make aesthetic judgments. At Stephen Decatur Middle School students are afforded the opportunity to participate in the following courses during the regular school day: band; jazz band; chorus; and keyboarding. Drama is offered to students as part of the after-school academy.

At the middle school level the primary purpose of the year-long foreign language program is to develop a readiness for formal language study. This course, which is based on the National Foreign Language Standards, has five goals: 1) communication in the target language; 2) knowledge and understanding of other cultures; 3) connections with other disciplines; 4) making comparisons; and 5) involvement with a multi-lingual community at home and around the world. Students are exposed to two languages and learn to appreciate diverse cultures.

The mathematics curriculum is divided in to seven content standards: Algebra; Geometry; Measurement; Statistics; Probability; Number Relationships; and Process. These standards create the foundation for rigorous instruction which leads to the development of essential skills, mathematics knowledge, and the real-world application of both. All students in grade 7 take pre-algebra and all students in grade 8 take Algebra I.

The foundation of the middle school English curriculum is based on an integrated language arts (ILA) approach, designed to meet the learning needs of the whole child through flexible, meaningful and developmentally appropriate instruction. Students are actively engaged in a variety of activities that help to increase their knowledge and skill base in the elements of reading, writing, and the conventions of the English language. Students study a wide variety of genres of literature identified as appropriate for their grade and interest level.

The main focus of grade 7 social studies is geography with an intense study of the history, economics, and government of each continent with an emphasis on globalization. In grade 8 the curriculum shifts to American History with an emphasis placed on the study of the American government. Both courses involve interactive learning that require students to engage and respond to historically significant events that develop an understanding of concepts rather than a memorization of facts.

The science curriculum for grade 7 includes a study of astronomy, chemistry, and the human body. In grade 8, students study electricity and magnetism, chemistry, genetics, and environmental science. At both levels instruction is delivered through lectures, inquiry based activities, and scientific experimentation. Students are

required to use proper scientific terminology, analyze ideas and trends, apply knowledge and skills, and include supporting evidence when necessary and to synthesize concepts.

**2a. (Elementary Schools) Reading:**

This question is for elementary schools only

**2b. (Secondary Schools) English:**

Our Integrated Language Arts (ILA) curriculum follows the Worcester County Curriculum Map which is aligned with the Maryland State Department of Education Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC). At each grade level the curriculum is made up of thematic-units which offer instruction in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Each unit incorporates a variety of literary genre. A balance of reading and writing instruction with particular emphasis on literary discussions are an integral part of each unit. Students are expected to engage and respond to literature through written and oral means. Grammar and vocabulary instruction is embedded in each unit and is taught as part of the reading/writing connection.

Academic teaching teams reinforce reading strategies across multiple curricula. Social studies and science teachers use various reading strategies in their content areas. All students in academic teams are exposed to essential reading skills throughout the school day. Reading success is the result of a coordinated team and school effort.

Reading progress of each student is carefully monitored. Students who have a demonstrated weakness in reading receive support from a variety of sources. First, teams work to create a formal plan of action for reading achievement for these students. As a result of this plan, students may be enrolled in one of three reading intervention programs. These reading programs are supplemental and occur during the regular school day. Each class has a maximum student enrollment of 5 – 7 to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention. Students in this category may also receive small group instruction from an educational assistant or intern, temporary pull-out for intense one-on-one instruction, or attend after school tutoring. These formal plans are reviewed and revised if needed on quarterly basis to ensure the effectiveness of the activities.

### **3. Additional Curriculum Area:**

The mathematics curriculum at Stephen Decatur Middle School follows the Worcester County Mathematics Curriculum Map which is aligned with the Maryland State Department of Education Voluntary State Curriculum (VSC). This curriculum is divided into seven content standards: Algebra; Geometry; Measurement; Statistics; Probability; Number Relationships; and Process. These standards create the foundation for rigorous instruction which leads to the development of essential skills, mathematics knowledge, and the real-world application of both.

In mathematics classes, students are heterogeneous grouped with all 7th graders taking pre-algebra and all 8th graders taking Algebra 1. Because our curriculum is based on the VSC, our math teachers do not rely on a textbook, but rather create their own resources for instruction and assessment. Math teachers have worked closely together in each grade level to create a bank of unit and quarterly lesson plans that are aligned with the VSC and the county curriculum map. They have also created benchmark assessments to evaluate student progress as well as their own instruction. By creating the lesson plans and assessments themselves, our teachers are not tied to a textbook, but rather can tailor their instruction to best meet the needs of the students who sit before them.

In addition to our eight math teachers, we also have a math resource teacher. This teacher works closely with all the math teachers to design computer-based activities that support classroom instruction, provide enrichment, as well as remediation and review activities. All math classes visit the math resource teacher in the math lab twice a month. This time allows the regular math teacher to work with small groups of students who need additional instruction. The math lab and the math resource teacher individually and together provide opportunities for teachers to tailor instruction to best meet the needs of their students.

### **4. Instructional Methods:**

Stephen Decatur Middle School delivers effective differentiated instruction by (1) getting to know their students well, (2) offering a variety of engaging learning experiences to all students that address diverse learning styles, and (3) giving teaching teams a wide range of flexibility.

Because all students on a team (approximately 80) share the same four academic teachers, considerable team planning time is devoted to sharing personal and academic information on each student, reviewing their history, and discussing how to best meet their individual needs. These alternate day meetings also include the guidance counselor, curriculum planner, and the principal, thereby producing a more complete profile on each child. Team teachers use this information to develop an educational plan, called a Plan for Success, for every student deemed to be at risk over time, that is, those students who fail to master specific objectives on several assessments. The plan stipulates how instruction is to be modified and delivered.

Equipped with this information, the master schedule gives teams the flexibility to change individual schedules, alter class size, create temporary learning groups, and assign educational assistants to a student, or a small group of students, based on a continuously updated stream of assessment data and personal information.

In addition, English language learners are assigned to teams that offer the assistance of an ESOL teacher. This teacher accompanies students to math and language arts classes, helps overcome the language barrier, helps teachers modify lessons, and delivers occasional and temporary individual and small group instruction. Each of the eight teaching teams has approximately six to eight special education students who are assisted in the mainstream by a special education teacher and educational assistants who meet with team teachers to tailor

instruction to their individual learning styles while still addressing the mandates of the state curriculum.

## **5. Professional Development:**

Professional development at Stephen Decatur Middle School is driven by our school improvement plan. In 2001 this school was accredited by The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Accreditation mandated a school improvement plan to be reviewed annually by a committee representing all stakeholders. A summer review begins with an analysis of student performance data through a student data management system that permits retrieval of individual and group data in many useful forms. This system is managed by a full time curriculum planner. Consequently, the review generates a list of activities to be implemented throughout the year that are based on objectives designed to improve student learning and increase assessment scores. The plan is monitored throughout the year by faculty and administration, and modified as necessary.

The curriculum planner meets with each teaching team weekly to help teams analyze data and implement strategies/activities set forth in the school improvement plan. Some examples are: how to retrieve student performance data to identify specific needs, how to align teacher made assessments with state tests, how to identify students eligible for special testing accommodations, how to incorporate technology effectively, providing team teachers with the latest research on teaching reading and math to at risk learners, assisting teams with temporary regrouping schemes.

The school improvement plan mandates that all academic departments meet four half days per year to create benchmark assessments, analyze data to determine which areas of the state curriculum require special attention, identify which strategies/techniques are successful with at risk students and how to implement them, and to explore best practices research.

The school district conducts four professional development days throughout the year wherein subject area supervisors help teachers become more effective by: reviewing state curricula; aligning instruction and assessments with the curricula; teaching demonstration lessons; and conducting workshops such as strategic planning, teaching at risk students, and learning theory and multi-sensory approaches to instruction.

## **6. School Leadership:**

The leadership structure in our school consists of our principal, two assistant principals and a curriculum planner. Our principal serves as the lead administrator. While their individual responsibilities vary, their common goal as the leadership team is providing teachers with the necessary resources and support to ensure student success.

The primary focus of our principal is student success. This is evident in his support of a computer based assessment data collection program. Our principal has encouraged the teachers to look at student achievement through meaningful data. In the past, collecting this data was time consuming and sometimes arbitrary. This changed with the installation of this software. This program allows teachers to correlate assessments to state standards and to analyze individual student performance by learning objectives. Our principal ensured that all teachers were able to use this program for every classroom assessment administered, allowing teachers to quickly evaluate each student's strengths and weaknesses and to offer opportunities for remediation and enrichment. This valuable tool has increased teacher productivity and allowed resources to be used efficiently to meet students' individual needs.

A second example that illustrates our principal's commitment to student achievement is his strong emphasis on teaming and his regular participation in team meetings. Teachers, the curriculum planner, guidance counselors and our principal meet every other day to discuss the academic and social needs of our students. In

a recent team meeting, we were discussing performance of our subgroups on classroom assessments using recent data. Under the leadership of our principal, we were quickly able to identify the academic needs of specific students and create a plan to help them receive additional remediation within the framework of the school day and also secure the materials to support these plans. Through his regular participation in these meetings, our principal is accessible and makes himself part of the team.





## PART VII - ASSESSMENT RESULTS

### STATE CRITERION-REFERENCED TESTS

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 7 Test: Maryland School Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: Current Year

Publisher: MSDE

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Mar	Mar	Mar	
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	92	93	87	83	
% Advanced	39	41	29	24	
Number of students tested	316	315	303	322	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	6	0	0	0	
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	87	90	79	67	
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	87	72	71	87	
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): African American</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	80	86	73	50	
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	37	37	27	26	
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	66	79	65	68	
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	35	18	26	41	
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

State testing for grade 7 did not begin until 2005.

Subject: Reading

Grade: 7

Test: Maryland School Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: 2006

Publisher: MSDE

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Mar	Mar	Mar	
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	92	89	85	81	
% Advanced	59	46	40	38	
Number of students tested	316	314	303	322	
Percent of total students tested	100	100	100	100	
Number of students alternatively assessed	2	0	0	0	
Percent of students alternatively assessed	6	0	0	0	
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	84	79	70	66	
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	73	56	50	57	
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): African American</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	78	81	65	52	
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	36	35	24	27	
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	66	61	69	51	
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	35	18	26	41	
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

The first year for state testing for grade 7 was 2005. Therefore, data is not available prior to that year. The publishing date and the administration date are the same.

Subject: Mathematics

Grade: 8 Test: Maryland School Assessment

Edition/Publication Year: Current Year

Publisher: MSDE

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	95	92	89	89	63
% Advanced	69	64	55	52	30
Number of students tested	328	289	335	332	317
Percent of total students tested	99	99	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	90	86	84	77	35
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	72	66	63	90	85
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): African American</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	84	86	64	73	28
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	45	36	47	45	50
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	74	77	75	59	16
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	23	22	47	29	33
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

Subject: Reading Grade: 8 Test: Maryland School Assessment  
Edition/Publication Year: Current Year Publisher: MSDE

	2007-2008	2006-2007	2005-2006	2004-2005	2003-2004
Testing Month	Apr	Mar	Mar	Mar	Mar
<b>SCHOOL SCORES</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	94	91	85	83	73
% Advanced	60	45	36	42	28
Number of students tested	329	290	336	332	347
Percent of total students tested	99	100	100	100	100
Number of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
Percent of students alternatively assessed	0	0	0	0	0
<b>SUBGROUP SCORES</b>					
<b>1. Free and Reduced Lunch/Socio-Economic Disadvantaged Students</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	89	79	83	66	53
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	64	53	52	59	45
<b>2. Racial/Ethnic Group (specify subgroup): African American</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	80	72	68	69	50
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	36	26	32	31	25
<b>3. (specify subgroup): Special Education</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced	83	64	63	59	12
% Advanced					
Number of students tested	23	22	48	29	33
<b>4. (specify subgroup):</b>					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
% Proficient plus % Advanced					
Number of students tested					

Notes:

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